

Commonwealth Council on Childhood Success
Early Elementary Subgroup
January 29 Meeting Notes

In Person Attendees:

Steven Staples, Superintendent, Dept of Education (Chair)
Karla Blasquez, Parent/ Loudoun Public Schools
Patricia Popp, Education of Homeless Children and Youth
Jim Baldwin, VA Association of Elementary School Principals
Ben Kiser, Virginia Association of School Superintendents
Aleta Lawson, Head Start Coordinator
Lisa Specter-Dunaway, CHIP of Virginia
Robin Haldiman, CHIP of Roanoke

Conference Call Attendees:

Dora Wynn, Brunswick County Public Schools
Karla Blasquez, Parent/ Loudoun Public Schools
Hillary Press, VA Counselors Association
Burnette Scarboro, NOVA PTA
Shannon Venable, Dominion

Presentations on Existing Services to At Risk Families

Aleta Lawson, Head Start Collaboration Director from the Department of Social Services

Aleta serves as the Collaboration Director for all the Head Start grantees in Virginia, and provided the group with an overview of the comprehensive services the program is required to provide to children outside of the educational curriculum. Her overview document (attached) includes more detailed information on all aspects of her presentation.

Roughly 16,600 children in VA are served by Head Start (3-5 year olds) and Early Head Start (birth -36 months) each year; this is out of roughly 500,000 children under the age of 5, roughly 35% of which are born to Medicaid eligible mothers. Total funding for the program is roughly \$113 million a year, which creates 3500 jobs in the state.

Her document explains all the health, behavioral, dental, and nutritional services that are provided to these children; as well as information about educational resources for parents, home visits (by family services staff and teachers), program participation by parents, and more.

Members had questions about the demand and wait lists – which tend to be largest in Fairfax and Tidewater. Aleta explained that children are pulled off the wait list based on the severity of their need (income eligibility, disability status, etc), not whether they were first in line.

When possible, children who are on the wait list are referred to VPI programs and to child care providers who accept subsidies. However, there are communities where none of this programming exists and at risk children are falling through the safety net. Hillary noted that Fairfax County offers summer programs for title 1 students who do not have any preschool experience and have fallen through such gaps, the group agreed to hear more about this program later on in the spring.

Aleta explained that a majority of teachers must be working towards their bachelor's degree if they don't already have it, and there is funding in the program to help with professional development. However, she noted that no VA school offer a bachelors in early childhood which means teachers who want bachelors in this are often manipulating other teaching programs to meet their needs and interests.

There were also questions about data on outcomes for these children, and though every child is tested 3 times a year on a certain set of domains, not all programs use the same instrument so the data can't be easily aggregated. Therefore the Commonwealth has no ability to track Head Start kids and their outcomes after they enter the public school system.

<Potential Recommendation for the Data and Governance Workgroup?>

Lisa Specter-Dunaway, CEO CHIP of Virginia and Home Visiting Consortium

Lisa is the CEO of CHIP of Virginia, which is one of the home visiting organizations in the state. She also is the chair of the Home Visiting Consortium, a coalition of all the home visiting providers in the state.

Lisa's power point (attached) provides an overview of the various programs, the communities they serve, and models and curriculum they each use. It's clear that while there is a high demand for home visiting, and the outcomes are demonstrable, only 12% of the need is being met statewide due to basic lack of resources. Questions were raised about services provided in challenged school communities, and while many of those communities have programs available they don't have the scale to begin bending the curve. Home Visiting programs are funded through a variety of state funds, federal and nonprofit grants, and traditional nonprofit fundraising.

These providers faces similar problems with data collection and looking at longitudinal outcomes of children. Each program has data, but the metrics are not consistent or useful for VLDS at this point. *<Potential Recommendation for the Data and Governance Workgroup?>*

Robin then shared information about a project currently underway in Roanoke , funded by the local United Way and facilitated by VA Tech Carilion Research Center, which helps connect the data from children served with their outcomes in Roanoke City and Botetourt County schools. Preliminary findings show that children do better in kindergarten the earlier they begin receiving services as a young child. The next phase of the project will be to dig into the various risk factors that contribute to a child's early experiences to help determine the most impactful to ultimately inform service provision.

Discussion of Metrics to Measure Success

The group then began a discussion about which metrics should be considered when measuring the success of children in early elementary school. One of the major questions raised was: what is our capacity to track data that yields valuable information on outcomes? It was noted that it may need to be answered over the course of the spring in partnership with the Data and Governance workgroup.

The expanded progress report/ report card used by some localities (like Fairfax) may be something to consider on this front. It was also noted that the social learning component is not currently reflected in PALS, and that should be considered as we make recommendations.

The group agreed that literacy fluency by 3rd grade is the golden benchmark, and that should guide any assessments and inform policy at every age before then.

Plans for Additional Meetings

February 5, 2015 at 1pm Webinar on Kindergarten Assessments (UVA and E3 will present on their recent studies of different assessment tools)

February 18, 2015 at 1pm in Conference Room 1 of the Patrick Henry Building; and via conference call: 866-842-5779 and with pass code 4399398107 (K teacher panel presentation and K readiness issues discussion)

March 4, 2015 at 1pm Webinar (Fairfax early Literacy Program and Prek Summer camp presentations; plus Kindergarten data (retention rates, # pre-school experience) from VDOE)

March 30, 2015 at 2pm in Conference Room 1 of the Patrick Henry Building and via conference call: 1-866-842-5779 and with pass code: 8047865834 **Please note the date and conference number change** (Achievement Gap discussion and development of preliminary areas of focus for recommendations)

May 4, 2015 3-5pm: Meeting of the full Commonwealth Council on Childhood Success, West Reading Room, Patrick Henry Building, 1111 East Broad Street Richmond, VA 23219